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Preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The report is prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 57/164 of 18 December 2002. The report describes the state of preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004 at the global, regional and national levels. It provides information on salient activities and experiences of the United Nations system, Member States and non-governmental organizations. It also includes recommendations for the successful observance of the anniversary.

* E/CN.5/2003/1.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/164 of 18 December 2002 entitled "Preparation for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family", in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council on the preparation for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at all levels. The report is divided into two parts. The first part describes intergovernmental deliberations, while the second part provides an account of actions and measures taken at all levels to prepare for the tenth anniversary.

II. Intergovernmental deliberations to prepare for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004

2. The Commission for Social Development is responsible for reviewing annually the preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. At its fortieth session, held from 11 to 21 February 2002, the Commission reviewed the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.5/2002/2) and recommended to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, the adoption of a draft resolution entitled "Preparation for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family" (A/C.3/57/L.6). By that resolution, States were invited to take prompt action to establish national mechanisms, as appropriate, to prepare for, observe and follow up the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in particular for the purpose of planning, stimulating and harmonizing the activities of the governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations concerned with the preparation for and observance of the tenth anniversary, and to cooperate with the Secretary-General in achieving the objectives of the tenth anniversary.

3. At its substantive session of 2002, the Economic and Social Council adopted the draft resolution of the Commission and recommended it for adoption by the General Assembly. The General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third Committee (see A/57/545), adopted the text as resolution 57/164.

4. At its fifty-seventh session, the General Assembly had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the International Year of the Family in 2004 (E/CN.5/2002/2; A/57/67-E/2002/45) and on the preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004 (A/57/139).

5. In the meeting of the Third Committee of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, representatives of nearly forty Member States and observers made statements centring on the preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.[1] In addition, discussions focused on the role of the family, national-level actions and the importance of family-related issues within the national development planning process. Thirty-six Member States expressed full support for the observance of the tenth anniversary. Many urged the international community to focus on issues such as reconciliation of work and family life, access of family members to employment, promotion of the rights of

women, support for family and social cohesion, attention to the rights and responsibilities of parents and action to strengthen the role of families and family values.

III. Measures taken at all levels to prepare for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004

A. National level

6. General Assembly resolution 56/113 of 19 December 2001 invited all Governments to take two specific organizational measures to prepare for the tenth anniversary: to establish a national coordinating mechanism, and to formulate a national programme. The list of countries in the annex provides evidence of the progress achieved in this regard as of November 2002. It should be noted that the data are not definitive, as some countries have not yet informed the Secretariat of their actions.

7. In 92 countries, national coordinating mechanisms for the anniversary have been established at the senior governmental level, often bringing together several national ministries, with one of them assuming the lead role. Several are chaired by the head of Government. In a number of countries, representatives of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the academic community and the media, as well as prominent personalities, have been active participants. In addition, a large number of national coordinating mechanisms have established working groups, subcommittees or complementary mechanisms to deal with particular aspects of the planned observances or to work with specific sectors in the national setting, such as coordinating with non-governmental organizations. In some countries,[2] non-governmental organizations are involved in the implementation of family policy by participating in joint ventures with Governments, participating in advisory bodies or organizing independent activities.

8. Priority issues identified by Member States for special attention in the context of the anniversary include, inter alia, unemployment of family members and barriers to participation in the labour market; balancing work and family responsibilities; the rights of children; gender equality and the situation of women in families; domestic violence; families with special needs, such as those with responsibilities for caring for elderly members or those with disabilities; erosion of family-based support networks; and increasing rates of divorce.

9. Various national plans of action in the Member States address a number of priorities, such as (a) a research component involving specific studies, publication programmes or expert group meetings; (b) a policy component involving publicizing and reviewing existing policies and programmes affecting families and identifying policy gaps on family issues, or formulating concrete plans to develop and implement new policies; (c) a legislative component involving reviews of existing legislation, proposed legislative reform or the enactment of new family-related laws;[3] (d) a private-sector component consisting of publicizing existing corporate policies to benefit families; and (e) promotional and awareness-raising elements

inspired by the International Day of Families, such as posters and other informative material, media campaigns or other special events and family day observances.[4]

10. A number of Governments have already organized, or are in the process of organizing conferences to observe the tenth anniversary. For example, in 2002 the National Family Commission in Malta organized a national conference concerning social welfare service to families, and from 21 to 26 June 2003 the Second World Congress on Family Violence, a non-governmental organization event, is to be held in Prague, Czech Republic, under the patronage of the President of the Republic. In 2004 Singapore plans to organize a regional conference on family life issues in Asia and Australia plans to organize a national conference in 2004.

B. Regional level

11. The United Nations regional commissions have continued their active involvement in preparing for the tenth anniversary. The commissions are uniquely placed to interact on an ongoing basis with national authorities and civil society to assess and address family-related needs at the regional level.

12. In 2004, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific will carry out family-related activities in the context of regional implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002[5] and the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific.[6] It will also highlight the role of the family in respect of its disability programme.

13. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has prepared a three-year project on empowerment of the Arab family to enhance its role in development and social cohesion, targeting poverty reduction, employment issues, interpersonal communication and advocacy issues.

14. In 2002, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean prepared a detailed list of governmental focal points in the region and provided technical assistance to the Governments of Chile and Costa Rica. The Commission issued a new edition of *Social Panorama of Latin America*, dealing with poverty in households and families. From the web page of the Division for Social Development (http://www.eclac.cl.dds, *Enlaces de interés*), it is possible to access the programme on the family in New York. In 2003, the Commission has scheduled an expert meeting on the impact of economic transformation on families in preparation for its regional conference in 2004.

15. In 2000, the Economic Commission for Europe launched a data collection and research programme entitled "The generations and gender programme: a study of the dynamics of families and family relationships". This is a cross-national, comparative, multidisciplinary, longitudinal study of the dynamics of the family and family relationships in contemporary industrialized countries, in Europe and North America. The intention is to promote this study widely during the period 2003-2004.

C. International level

1. Department of Economic and Social Affairs

16. The launching of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family will take place in December 2003 at United Nations Headquarters. Activities planned on this occasion include a message of the Secretary-General and a panel discussion in cooperation with concerned partners.

17. In December 2003, in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the programme on the family, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, will publish a study on the global situation of families. The document will draw on statistics and scientific literature as well as on the experiences of national and local authorities, communities and non-governmental organizations. It is intended to analyse implications of data and country experiences for the design of family policies. Specifically, it will include analyses of factors affecting five trends and their impact on family life and on the social functions of families: (a) changes in family structure concerning such issues as smaller household size, delayed marriage and childbearing, and increases in divorce rates and single-parenthood; (b) the rise in migration; (c) demographic ageing and its social and economic implications; (d) the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and (e) globalization and its impact on families.

18. The Department also plans to publish a study entitled "Family indicators" in the spring of 2003. The design of effective family policies should be based on the accurate provision of data. Therefore, the development of a system of family indicators is important for the interpretation of data. The study will look critically at current practices regarding indicators as well as the basic conditions necessary for the establishment of a comprehensive array of family indicators. Static, dynamic and functional indicators are to be discussed to illuminate the changes that have affected families in recent decades.

19. The Department has assisted Governments in developing long-term family-related programmes, plans and strategies within the framework of the objectives of the International Year of the Family. Furthermore, the Department has highlighted a positive message on "the family", underlining the important socio-economic functions families perform.

20. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has encouraged Governments to utilize the tenth anniversary as an occasion for policy review, reform and improvement. It has promoted the integration of a strong family component in national development strategies and plans because families offer a comprehensive and synthesizing approach to social policy and development. Important instruments to promote awareness include the Department's web site (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/index.html); its bimonthly web-based circular *Family Matters*, and the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities.

21. The United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities, administered by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs serves as a resource to fund projects that benefit family policy development and research. Seed money has been provided to Governments and non-governmental organizations for projects that have a strong focus on family well-being. Special attention is given to developing countries, especially the least developed countries, and to countries with economies in transition.

22. Every year on 15 May, the Department organizes the celebration of the International Day of Families at United Nations Headquarters. The themes for 2003 and 2004 will be respectively "Preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family" and "The tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family".

23. The Department is establishing an inter-university network, in which more than a dozen academics in the field of family studies have professed interest. The network will serve as a system through which information will be provided to Governments, non-governmental organizations and academia. Its focus will be on analyses of phenomena that impact family life and family structure and on suggestions for policy designs in dealing with problems concerning the family. The formulation, implementation and evaluation of adequate family policies should be the overall goal of the network.

24. The envisaged inter-university network will be a mechanism to facilitate and coordinate global exchanges, and to provide access to and distribution of the latest research findings on national family policies. It will also: (a) stimulate the dissemination of ideas and academic knowledge; (b) reinforce interregional cooperation; and (c) facilitate the exchange of experiences and information on emerging substantive themes, inter alia: (i) changing family structures; (ii) migration and family life; (iii) technology and its impact on the family; (iv) parental roles and intrafamilial support systems; (v) the role of fathers; (vi) statistics and indicators for family well-being; (vii) HIV/AIDS and its impact on families and family policies; and (viii) retirement and its implications for families. Research results of participating scholars will be posted on the web site of the Department's programme on the family (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/index.html), thereby making them accessible to the public, other scholars and policy makers.

25. In this connection, an expert group meeting scheduled to take place in Vienna in 2003 will allow participating scholars to exchange views, discuss a work plan and develop a long-term research agenda that will deal with family issues linked to the millennium development goals; the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen in 1995; and the objectives of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

26. In addition, the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs have agreed to set up an interactive Internet forum, with the support of international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council to prepare a report on (a) past and present projects carried out for families since 1994 by each international non-governmental organization; and (b) the plans of each international non-governmental organization for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of International Year of the Family in 2004. Each non-governmental organization willing to join the forum will receive a user identity code, thereby enabling it to set up its own section of the web site using a uniform format applicable to all network members. Categories will be formed according to the substantive issues addressed by the international non-governmental organizations, such as education, health promotion and HIV/AIDS. Search engines will be able to seek out organizations clustered in these categories. Each participating organization will be able to make use of an interactive online conference and discussion board. Information specific to each of the participating organizations can be updated by each organization itself.

Once created, the interactive Internet forum will provide a focused channel of communication and encourage civil society organizations to establish partnerships with Governments and international organizations.

2. United Nations system

27. Numerous entities of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions (see section III.B), have undertaken specific measures to prepare for and observe the anniversary especially in regard to awareness-raising. In particular, the Public Affairs Division and the Information Centres Service of the Department of Public Information are collaborating with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in organizing the 15 May annual International Day of Families at United Nations Headquarters, thereby delivering family-related messages throughout the world.

28. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations adopted the Third Plan of Action on Gender and Development (2002-2007). The plan addresses the capacities of family members, women and men alike, to achieve both sustainable livelihoods and household food security. Its main objectives are to promote gender equality (a) in access to sufficient, safe and nutritionally adequate food; (b) in policy and decision-making processes at all levels in the agricultural and rural sector; and (c) in opportunities for on- and off-farm rural employment.

29. The Family and Community Health Cluster of the World Health Organization has been involved in various areas of concern to families, including child and adolescent health, safer pregnancy and reproductive health and the effects of HIV/AIDS on family life. Efforts by the World Health Organization have continued to enhance international cooperation on family-related issues. It remains active in providing guidance on ways to strengthen family-centred components of policies and programmes.

30. Besides the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization are also active in the areas of advocacy and exchange of experiences concerning the family. For example, UNESCO will organize regional consultations in 2003 on family-support policies and the International Labour Organization is encouraging Governments to develop policies and programmes concerning the reconciliation of professional and family life.

3. Intergovernmental organizations

31. Intergovernmental organizations continue to make major contributions to the preparations for the anniversary by disseminating information, organizing meetings and seminars, promoting research and providing assistance and guidance in policy development. Several such organizations have taken special measures to develop activities for the anniversary's observance. Statements and decisions expressing support for the tenth anniversary and calling for specific action were adopted by the governing bodies of several intergovernmental organizations. For example, the African Union envisages a regional meeting in 2003 to elaborate an African charter on the family. The Caribbean Community secretariat (CARICOM) is conducting a review of family themes and is devising an integrated approach to the tenth anniversary. The Council of Europe is promoting activities and policies in the field

of childhood policies, family affairs, children's rights and social support of children and families. The Organization of the Islamic Conference is preparing for the observance of the tenth anniversary by intensive advocacy measures among its member States.

4. Non-governmental organizations

32. Non-governmental organizations have continued their significant partnership role with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs serving as an effective advocate.[7] As a result the number of national, regional and international non-governmental organizations engaged in preparing for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family has been growing. Their major areas of activity continue to be (a) spreading the message of the anniversary to the local and community levels; (b) promoting awareness of the principles and objectives of the International Year of the Family; (c) organizing meetings or seminars on family issues; (d) exchanging information; (e) supporting research on family issues; and (f) mobilizing Governments to establish national coordination mechanisms and participating in them. Various non-governmental organizations have prepared policy and position papers on the family, while others have adopted pertinent resolutions. The New York NGO Committee on the Family collaborates with the Department in celebrating the annual International Day of Families at United Nations Headquarters.

IV. Conclusions and suggested actions

33. At the national level, the preparatory process has established frameworks of organizational arrangements, activated significant numbers of important partners and brought about substantive and promotional activities worldwide. Many countries have established national coordinating committees or similar mechanisms for the tenth anniversary: national programmes for the preparation and observance of the anniversary have been initiated in more than 50 countries (see annex).

34. Those national efforts are being supported by regional and international organizations: the regional commissions are playing a lead role in their respective regions, and at the international level numerous non-governmental organizations are acting as partners in the preparation and observance of the anniversary, supported by the non-governmental organization committees on the family in Vienna and New York.

35. At the United Nations, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through its promotional, informational and research initiatives, has tried to achieve a better understanding of the functions and problems of families and promote awareness of the economic, social and demographic processes affecting families and their members.

36. Significant achievements have been made during the preparatory process. Still, numerous challenges remain in order to ensure a successful observance of the anniversary. In this regard, the following actions are suggested:

(a) **While the preparatory process has established the organizational and promotional backdrop for the observance of the anniversary, it is imperative that Governments promote and facilitate the actual observance of the**

anniversary at the national and local levels, with the full participation of all segments of society. Selected complementary measures at the regional and international levels are also necessary;

(b) Governments are encouraged to raise awareness of family issues, promote a greater mainstreaming of family issues in their social policies and formulate national strategies for enhancing the well-being of families beyond 2004;

(c) Governments are encouraged to enlist all segments of society in the development and implementation of national plans, including family associations, other grass-roots networks, non-governmental organizations, the media, educational and research institutions, and the private sector;

(d) Concerned United Nations agencies and bodies, especially the regional commissions, should emphasize the family perspective in development cooperation and encourage regional and subregional cooperation in matters relating to families, monitoring progress in the regions, identifying needs, collecting and analysing information, sponsoring action-oriented research and development, and providing advisory services and training of personnel;

(e) Governments are invited to help research and academic institutions to promote research on family-related issues, identify needs, set priorities and encourage innovative approaches; and to share findings, including through the inter-university network;

(f) Governments are invited to strengthen partnerships with non-governmental organizations working on family issues and to promote their contribution to those organizations at all levels, particularly with regard to advocacy and policy formulation.

Notes

[1] Statements were made by representatives from Algeria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Chile, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Haiti, Holy See, India, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Saint Lucia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tunisia and Uganda.

[2] Australia, Canada, Mauritius, New Zealand and Panama.

[3] Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Belarus, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Romania, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Sudan and Thailand.

[4] Belarus, Brunei Darussalam, Ireland, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, the Philippines, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand and Trinidad and Tobago.

[5] *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[6] *Report of the Regional Meeting on a Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, Macau, 28 September to 1 October 1998* (E/ESCAP/1132 and Corr.1, 1999), chap. VI, annex. Available from http://www.unescap.org/55/e1132e.htm.

[7] The World Movement of Mothers, the Institute for Traffic Care, the Baha'i International Community, the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Family Support America, the New York NGO Committee on the Family, the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, the Union of Latvian Families, the Large Families Association and the Global Action Committee for the Elimination of Violence in the Family, the International Federation for Family Development, the Focus on the Family Canada, Parents Forum, the Foundation for the Rights of the Family, the Family Support Federation of Argentina, International Federation of Training and Development Organizations, the International Federation for Parent Education, the Foundation for the Child and the Family (Greece), and the Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture.

Annex

Status of preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family as of November 2002

Albania[a, b]
Algeria[a, b]
Antigua and Barbuda[a, b]
Argentina[b]
Australia[a, b]
Austria[a, b]
Barbados[a, b]
Belarus[a, b]
Benin[a, b]
Bolivia[a, b]
Brunei Darussalam[a, b]
Burkina Faso[a, b]
Cameroon[a, b]
Chile[a, b]
Colombia[a, b]
Congo[a]
Côte d'Ivoire[a, b]
Croatia[a, b]
Cuba[a, b]
Cyprus[a, b]
Czech Republic[a, b]
Democratic Republic of the Congo[a, b]
Dominican Republic[b]
Ecuador[a, b]
Egypt[a, b]
El Salvador[a, b]
Equatorial Guinea[b]
Estonia[a, b]
Ethiopia[a, b]
Gambia[a, b]
Germany[a, b]
Ghana[a, b]
Greece[a, b]
Guatemala[a, b]
Guinea[a]
Guyana[a, b]
Holy Sea[a, b]
Hungary[a, b]
Italy[a, b]
Indonesia[a, b]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)[b]
Israel[a, b]
Jamaica[a, b]
Japan[b]
Jordan[a, b]
Kuwait[a, b]
Latvia[a, b]
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya[a, b]
Lithuania[a, b]
Luxembourg[a, b]
Madagascar[a, b]
Malawi[a, b]
Malaysia[a, b]
Maldives[a, b]
Mali[a, b]
Malta[a, b]
Mauritius[a, b]
Mexico[a, b]
Morocco[a, b]
Namibia[b]
Nepal[b]
New Zealand[a, b]
Nicaragua[b]
Nigeria[a, b]
Papua New Guinea[a, b]
Philippines[a, b]
Poland[a, b]
Qatar[a, b]
Republic of Korea[a, b]
Romania[a, b]
Russian Federation[a, b]
Rwanda[a, b]
Saint Lucia[a, b]
San Marino[b]
Senegal[a, b]
Singapore[a, b]
Slovakia[a, b]
Slovenia[a]
South Africa[a, b]
Spain[a, b]
Sudan[a, b]
Suriname[a, b]
Syrian Arab Republic[a, b]
Thailand[a, b]
Tunisia[a, b]
Turkey[a, b]
Uganda[a, b]
Ukraine[a, b]
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland[a, b]
United Republic of Tanzania[a, b]
Uruguay[a, b]
Venezuela[a, b]
Zambia[a, b]
Zimbabwe[a, b]

[a] Formulation of a national programme of action for the tenth anniversary.
[b] Establishment of a national coordinating committee for the tenth anniversary.